

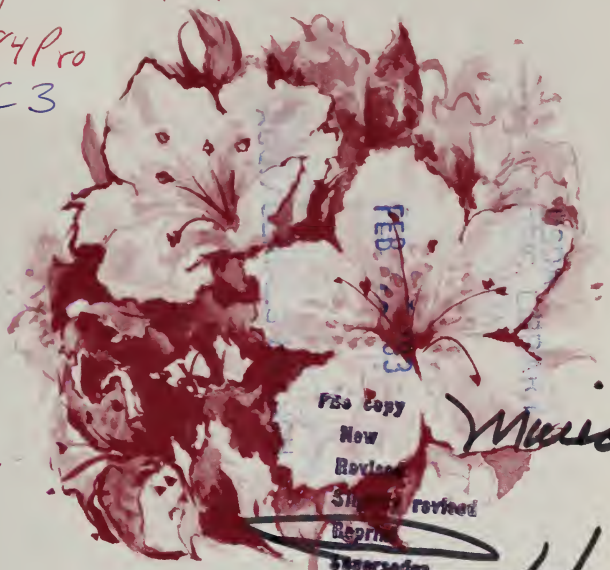
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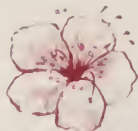
azaleas and

rhododendrons

at the National Arboretum



PROGRAM AID 491 NATIONAL ARBORETUM  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE



# azaleas and



# rhododendrons

## at the National Arboretum

One of the most colorful spring-flowering groups at the National Arboretum, Washington, D.C., is the collection of azaleas and rhododendrons.

A collection of species and horticultural varieties hardy in this climate is being assembled at the Arboretum in furtherance of its scientific and educational objectives. Standard reference collections are maintained for comparative study and evaluation. Species and selected breeding strains are available for research purposes. One aim of the research is to produce improved races for cultivation in climates where azaleas and rhododendrons now are not well adapted.

### BOTANICAL RELATIONSHIPS

Azaleas and rhododendrons are members of the heath family (Ericaceae) and are closely related to the blueberries, cranberries, trailing-arbutus, and mountain laurel.

The original, or Linnean, classification (in 1753) of these plants was based largely upon American species. It seemed logical at that time to place the deciduous (leaf-shedding) kinds in one genus, *Azalea*, and the evergreen kinds in another genus, *Rhododendron*. But, with the subsequent influx of species from the Orient (about 700 species have since been described), it was found that no simple and constant characters remained as a basis for separation; some of the "azaleas" were evergreen and some of the "rhododendrons" were deciduous. Consequently, during the present century, most botanical authors have assigned all species of azaleas to the genus *Rhododendron*.

Even though azaleas are botanically

rhododendrons, most gardeners and nurserymen will continue to refer to the name "azalea" for the thin-leaved, semievergreen or deciduous types, and to "rhododendron" for the large leathery-leaved and fully evergreen kinds.

## THE ARBORETUM COLLECTION

*Azaleas*.—Two main plantings of azaleas are especially conspicuous during the flowering season in April and May—the Glenn Dale hybrids of the first group, and the Ghent and Mollis hybrids of the second group, mentioned below.

The Glenn Dale hybrids cover the slopes of Mount Hamilton generally above the roadway. They are also exhibited as a named collection in the brick-walled Morrison Garden and in the areas surrounding it.

The Ghent and Mollis hybrids are found below the roadway in many scattered plantings.

### KINDS OF AZALEAS



Semievergreens with white, pink, or red flowers derived from Japanese *Rhododendron obtusum*; includes Kurume, Glenn Dale, and Kaempferi hybrids.



Deciduous species with orange-red flowers, derived from *Rhododendron molle* of China, *R. japonicum* of Japan, *R. luteum* from the Caucasus, and American species; includes Ghent and Mollis hybrids.



Wild, deciduous plants with white, pink, or orange-red flowers, comprising about 16 native species; includes "bush honeysuckles" and "flame azaleas" that grow from New England to Florida and Texas.



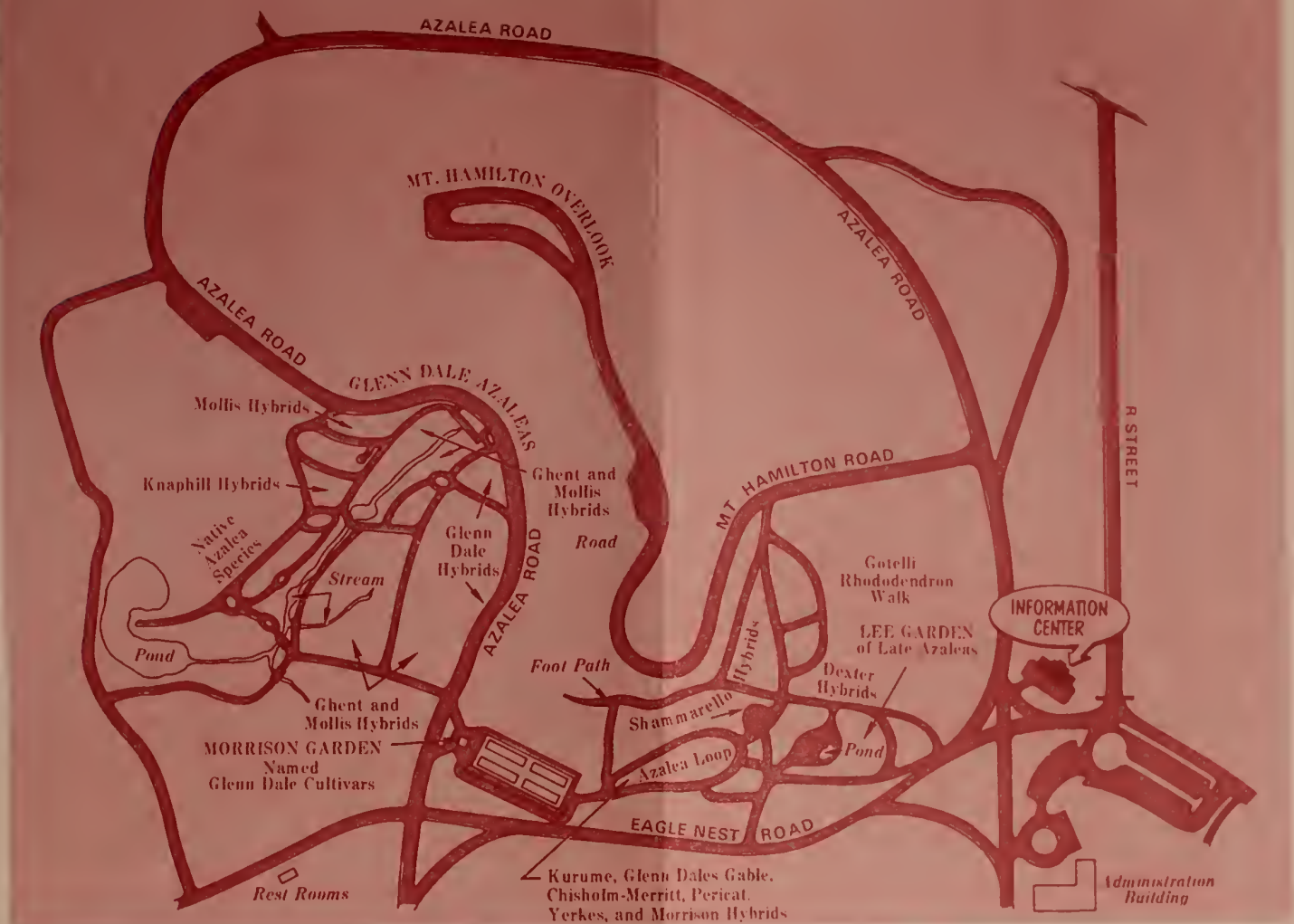
Large-flowered "Indian" azaleas found in gardens of Charleston, S.C. and along the Gulf Coast; not reliably hardy at the National Arboretum.



Species from China and Japan of interest primarily to collectors or botanists, but includes *R. schlippenbachii* and *R. yedoense* frequently cultivated in gardens.







These hybrids are also assembled as a named collection in a central part of Azalea Valley.

Many other kinds of azaleas, including the Kurume and Kaempferi hybrids and the native azalea species, are represented in the Arboretum collection of more than 1,900 cultivars. The Glenn Dale and the Ghent and Mollis hybrids, however, will remain the most conspicuous plantings for some years.

**Rhododendrons.**—Included in the Arboretum collection of “true” rhododendrons are some 200 species and garden hybrids. These can be seen as grouped plantings on the north side of Mount Hamilton and as scattered individual plants in the lower part of Azalea Valley. Most of the plants are English varieties, which have

large leaves and many-colored flowers. However, American Dexter cultivars and the better-known species also are well represented.

## LOCATION OF MAJOR GROUPS

The more important Arboretum plantings of azaleas and rhododendrons may be located by directional signs on the principal foot trails.

### Glenn Dale Hybrids

These large-flowered “Japanese” hybrid azaleas were bred at the Glenn Dale Station of the United States Department of Agriculture by B. Y. Morrison. They are well adapted for

planting in this area and 65,000 representatives provide the main display above the long curve of Azalea Road. Plants of over 400 selections, which were named by Morrison and released by the Department, are assembled for comparative study in the Morrison Garden and on areas surrounding it.

### **Kurume and Kaempferi Hybrids**

A number of Kurume and Kaempferi hybrid azaleas and closely related Gable hybrids are planted along the upper levels of Mount Hamilton walk, which starts at the Morrison Garden. Along a grass walk north of the Morrison Garden is a much larger collection of several hundred cultivars of the standard Kurume, Glenn Dale, Gable, Chisholm-Merritt, Pericat, Yerkes, Morrison, and Shammarello hybrids—planted in color groupings.

### **Ghent Hybrids**

Many of these are immediately across the road from Morrison Garden. A named collection of Ghent hybrids is located in the lower center of Azalea Valley.

### **Mollis Hybrids**

Principle plantings are assembled adjacent to the ravine below the brick overlook. The excellent collections of Ghent and Mollis hybrids were donated by the Dutch.

### **Knaphill Hybrids**

These large-flowered deciduous azaleas were introduced from England. Some of them—the Exbury hybrids—were bred at the Exbury estate of the late Lionel de Rothschild. The collection of Knaphill cultivars, which bloom in May after the Mollis azaleas, is assembled in the lower center of Azalea Valley near the Mollis azaleas. The Knaphill hybrids seem to be very hardy and exhibit a wide color range that includes white, yellow, pink, orange, and red.





### Native Azalea Species

American species, with their numerous variants and hybrids, are grouped in the small valley running down to the south arm of Horseshoe Pond. This collection is a product of research work with the native species—work that began in 1951.

### Exotic Species

A number of exotic species, chiefly from China and Japan and including *R. luteum*, *mariesi*, *ovatum*, *reticulatum*, and *schlippenbachi*, are located across the road from Morrison Garden—just below the first grouping of Ghent hybrids.

### The Lee Garden of Late Azaleas

The Lee Garden featuring the best of the late flowering azaleas is situated on the wooded north slope of Mt. Hamilton at the northern end of the Arboretum's Azalea Loop Trail.

The Lee Garden features Chugai, Satsuki, Hirado, late Glenn Dale, and Nikahari hybrids as well as the June-flowering species. Additional late azaleas and rhododendrons are planted in the Gotelli Conifer Woods.

Rhododendrons

The main collection of named hybrid rhododendrons is to be found along the Gotelli Walk, which extends around the lower north side of Mount Hamilton from the Evergreen Azalea Trail to the Mount Hamilton approach road. The Dexter hybrids flank a loop trail in the same area. In addition to the hybrids planted along this trail, a species planting has been started here. Plants of 36 varieties of the Sharmmarello *R. fortunei-smirnowi-catawbiense* hybrids are grouped at the east end of Gotelli Walk.

A number of the very hardy Catawba hybrids are planted on the upper slopes of Azalea Valley. Young plants of additional English hybrids are planted below the small pond near the lower footbridges and above the Gotelli Collection of Dwarf Conifers. Sizable specimens of *R. fortunei* decorate the approach to the Dogwood Planting in the northeast part of the Arboretum.

BLOOMING DATES

Early Rhododendron	
Hybrids	Late March to Early May
Kurume Hybrids*	Late April to Mid-May
Mollis Hybrids*	Late April to Mid-May
Gable Hybrids*	Late April to Late May
Ghent Hybrids*	Late April to Late May
Glenn Dale Hybrids*	Late April to Late May
Knaphill Hybrids*	Early May to Late May
Dexter Hybrids	Mid-May to Late May
Shammarello Hybrids	Mid-May to Late May
Late Rhododendron	
Hybrids	Mid-May to Early June
Satsuki Hybrids*	Late May to Late June

NOTE: Asterisk designates azaleas; others are rhododendrons.

Information on the selection, planting, and care of azaleas and rhododendrons is supplied in HG 71, "Growing Azaleas and Rhododendrons". For copies of this publication, write to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

